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Editorial

Introduction to "Viruses of Microbes III" Special Section of *Virology*

This special section of Virology highlights current research on viruses of microbes, as discussed at the EMBO Viruses of Microbes (VoM III) conference that took place at the ETH Zurich, Switzerland, July 14–18, 2014 (http://events.embo.org/14-virus-microbe/program.html). This conference is the latest installment in a series that started in 2010 in Paris and continued in 2012 in Brussels. Similar to the goals of the two previous meetings, VoM III aimed to cover the viruses of microbes field as widely as possible, but with special emphasis on functional aspects as reflected in its subtitle "Structure and function, from molecules to communities".

The sustained interest in viruses of microbes is amply demonstrated by the high level of participation at this conference series: 420 registrants at VoM I in Paris in 2010, 389 at VoM II in Brussels in 2012, and 349 at VoM III in Zurich. Most can be seen in the Supplementary Figure. Participants came from 41 countries and all continents except Antarctica. There were 60 oral presentations and 240 posters, which led to a scientifically intense few days, gratefully ameliorated by gorgeous weather. Two firsts were a session devoted entirely to fungal viruses, and three sessions on biotechnological applications that included several talks from industry. The latter perhaps reflects an increased commercial interest in developing novel virus-based antimicrobial strategies; representatives of industry came from 11 different countries.

Viruses never cease to amaze with their plethora of infection strategies, even those seemingly constrained by possessing very few genes. Conversely, the complexity of viruses with genomes larger than many free-living bacteria is bewildering. The VoM III conference topics reflected viral diversity and the importance and the potential utility of viruses in medicine and technology. Topics ranged from the atomic structures of viral proteins at one end of the spectrum to viral ecology at another, from hard-core molecular biology to phage therapy, from virus population dynamics to metagenomics, and with many other stops – both en route and as side-trips that together weave an intricate web of virus biology. It is our immensely satisfying goal to dissect and try to understand the elegant life-styles of the Viruses of Microbes.

VoM III was the second official meeting of the International Society for Viruses of Microorganisms (ISVM; http://www.isvm.org/), which was incorporated on September 27, 2011. It has just completed an election of new officers with Laurent Debarbieux (Institut Pasteur) being nominated the Society President. ISVM takes its roots at the 2008 Edinburgh phage conference where the organizers suggested the idea of an international phage society. Two years later at VoM I, a decision was made to create such a society, one that is now thriving.

Elsevier, through its journal *Virology*, supported VoM III in part by sponsoring this Special Section, which contains an eclectic mix of research papers and reviews. It was not possible to cover all the topics presented at the meeting. However, we think that the articles in this section reflect a broad spectrum of the research that was discussed and should be of interest to all microbial virologists. The paper by Redrejo-Rodríguez and Salas (PMID: 25232661) was intended to be part of the section but was inadvertently included in the November 2014 issue of *Virology*. We are grateful to the authors for providing their contributions and to Elsevier for making all papers in this special section open access.

Appendix A. Supplementary material

Supplementary data associated with this article can be found in the online version at http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.virol.2015.01.001.

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